

**TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
BUDGET AND POLICY COMMITTEE
MONDAY 16th MARCH, 2026**

**BRIEFING NOTE
UK TOWN OF CULTURE**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Committee will be aware from the last Meeting of a recent initiative enabling towns to submit applications to seek to be recognised as the UK Town of Culture [UK Town of Culture 2028 - Devon Funding News](#). For more information see also <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-town-of-culture-2028-expression-of-interest/uk-town-of-culture-2028-expression-of-interest-guidance-for-bidders>.
- 1.2 As reported previously the initiative is presently at expression of interest (EOI) stage and is being explored by a stakeholder group supported by, amongst others Tavistock BID Co and West Devon Borough Council in connection with the 'small town' (under 20,000 population) category. At its last meeting the Council appointed two Member representatives to the Group.
- 1.3 A request has now been received from the Steering Group for the Town Council to provide initial support, by acting, for the purposes of the expression of interest stage as the 'Lead Applicant'. That is to say the body responsible for information and communication purposes with the Government and with a place on the partnership body for the initiative.

2. ANALYSIS

- 2.1 It is important to distinguish between the role of 'Lead Applicant' and subsequently (should the EOI be successful) those other roles designated under the process which then come into play, namely:
 - a) Accountable Body; and
 - b) Delivery Body.That is not to say the Lead Applicant may not continue in being, but the above represent the more substantial future roles for other stakeholders. However, the responsibilities should still not be underestimated - a web search suggests even for the 'Lead Applicant':-

role of lead applicant in the uk town of culture

The lead applicant in the UK Town of Culture competition is responsible for leading the Expression of Interest (EOI) stage and guiding the bidding process. They play a crucial role in:

- **Leading the EOI stage:** The lead applicant is responsible for submitting the initial EOI on behalf of the town. This involves outlining the town's vision, goals, and how they plan to deliver their cultural program.
- **Guiding the bidding process:** The lead applicant provides guidance and support throughout the bidding process, ensuring that the town's submission aligns with the competition's aims and criteria.
- **Ensuring compliance:** The lead applicant must ensure that the town's submission adheres to all guidelines and requirements set by the competition organizers.
- **Facilitating community engagement:** The lead applicant may also engage with the community to gather feedback and support for the town's bid, which can be crucial in the selection process.

The lead applicant's role is vital in helping the town to present its unique story and cultural offerings to the public and to the expert panel. They must demonstrate a deep understanding of the town's identity, history, and the importance of cultural contributions to the national story.

2.2 Accordingly, as Town Council resources are currently heavily committed, any decision if made to take on this role should, it is submitted, be prefaced by a commitment from the Steering Group and its member bodies that it has resources to contribute meaningfully to these stages. To be clear the Council does not have a designated or available resource to support the process beyond acting as a required periodic intermediary between the Steering Group and Government. More than that would likely require the allocation of scarce financial resources to acquire specialist support.

2.3 Para's 2.1 (a)-(b) are also accompanied by substantial responsibilities and obligations which are potentially best placed with organisations/authorities of considerably larger size and resource base than the Town Council, which could not meaningfully undertake those. However, the Borough Council has indicated informally that, should a single BID from the Borough be successful at EOI stage, it would be minded to support same through subsequent stages.

2.4 As the deadline for submission of EOIs is the end of March, and if the Council wishes to take on this role to support the Steering Group on what is undoubtedly a worthy initiative, on the basis outlined above (ie with no commitment to the more onerous other roles listed) it will no doubt wish to be satisfied that any BID it is submitting on behalf of the Steering Group is satisfactory.

- 2.5 To that end a copy of the emerging draft EOI is appended for review (Appendix 1 refers).

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Committee and Tavistock Town Council
- a) Consider whether it wishes to act as 'Lead Applicant' in connection with a BID under the UK Town of Culture Scheme on the basis outlined above;
 - b) If the answer is in the affirmative, the Committee and Council
 - note the restricted resource/capacity base to provide other than periodic baseline administrative support for the EOI process;
 - review the draft EOI and recommend as to whether to accept same as a basis for the submission to be made subject to consideration of a more detailed document at the Meeting of Council itself.
- 3.2 Note:- should it adopt the foregoing, and if the EOI were to progress beyond the first stage, Council will also need to consider the additional resource base then required to support the future requirements of the 'Lead Applicant' role.
- 3.3 The instructions of the Committee and Council are sought.

**CARL HEARN
TOWN CLERK
TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
MARCH 2026**